

**WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**

1        1. A method of facilitating identification of the  
2 contents of a container for a group of commodities, com-  
3 prising the steps of:

4        providing the group with at least one identifying  
5 indicium;

6        confining the group in a container;

7        generating at least one signal which is indicative  
8 of the at least one indicium;

9        encoding the at least one signal; and

10       applying to the container at least one decodable  
11 symbol which is indicative of the encoded at least one  
12 signal.

1        2. The method of claim 1, wherein the group is a  
2 block-shaped array of rod-shaped articles of the tobacco  
3 processing industry, said confining step including  
4 draping the array into at least one blank of wrapping  
5 material.

1        3. The method of claim 1, wherein the at least one iden-  
2 tifying indicium is a composite indicium, and further  
3 comprising the step of making the commodities, said pro-  
4 viding step including furnishing at least some of the  
5 commodities with portions of identifying indicia in  
6 the course of said making step.

1        4. The method of claim 1, wherein the at least one  
2 indicium is a composite indicium and said providing step  
3 includes furnishing at least some of the commodities  
4 with portions of a composite indicium, said signal gene-  
5 rating step including generating at least one signal  
6 which is indicative of mutual positions of portions of  
7 the composite indicium in the group.

1           5. The method of claim 1, wherein the at least one  
2     identifying indicium is detectable through the container  
3     and said signal generating step includes monitoring the  
4     group subsequent to said confining step.

1           6. The method of claim 1, wherein said providing  
2     step includes applying to at least one commodity of the  
3     group at least one foreign object which is detectable  
4     through the container.

1        7. A method of ascertaining the integrity of the  
2 contents of a container which confines at least one dis-  
3 crete commodity, comprising the steps of:  
4        associating the at least one commodity with at least  
5 one identifying indicium;  
6        confining the thus identified at least one commodity  
7 in the container;  
8        monitoring the at least one indicium to gather  
9 information denoting the thus detected identifying indi-  
10 cium;  
11        encoding the thus gathered information; and  
12        applying the encoded information to the container.

1        8. The method of claim 7, wherein said monitoring  
2 step is carried out subsequent to said confining step  
3 and said at least one identifying indicium is detectable  
4 through the container.

1        9. The method of claim 7, wherein the contents of  
2 the container consist of an array of smokers' products,  
3 said associating step including providing at least some  
4 smokers' products of the array with portions of a  
5 composite encoded information.

1        10. The method of claim 7, wherein said associating  
2 step includes providing the commodity with a pattern  
3 of randomly distributed portions of a composite identi-  
4 fying indicium.

1        11. The method of claim 10, wherein said monitoring  
2 step is carried out prior to said confining step.

1        12. The method of claim 7, wherein said monitoring  
2 step includes ascertaining at least one of (a) the posi-  
3 tion and (b) the characteristics of the at least one  
4 indicium.

1        13. The method of claim 7, further comprising the  
2 steps of decoding the applied information and comparing  
3 the decoded information with the information obtained  
4 as a result of said monitoring step.

1        14. The method of claim 13, wherein said monitoring  
2 step includes ascertaining the position of the at least  
3 one indicium.

1        15. The method of claim 13, wherein said monitoring  
2 step includes generating a plurality of first signals  
3 and further comprising the step of generating a second  
4 signal denoting the sum of said first signals, said  
5 encoding step including encoding said second signal.

1        16. The method of claim 7, wherein said associating  
2        step includes associating the at least one commodity  
3        with an indicium which is detectable through the  
4        container by at least one of acoustic, electrical, mag-  
5        netic, electromagnetic, high-frequency, microwave and  
6        X-ray detectors.

1        17. The method of claim 7, wherein said associating  
2        step includes providing the at least one commodity with  
3        at least one internal identifying indicium.

1        18. The method of claim 7, wherein said associating  
2        step includes providing the at least one commodity with  
3        at least one external identifying indicium.

1        19. The method of claim 7, wherein the at least  
2        one commodity exhibits at least one criterion and said  
3        associating step includes depriving the at least one  
4        commodity of said at least one criterion.

1        20. Apparatus for facilitating identification of  
2        the contents of a container for a group of commodities  
3        at least one of which exhibits at least one identifying  
4        indicium, comprising:  
5        means for generating at least one signal indicative  
6        of the at least one identifying indicium;  
7        means for encoding the at least one signal; and  
8        means for applying to the container at least one  
9        decodable symbol which is indicative of the encoded at  
10       least one signal.



1        21. The apparatus of claim 20, further comprising  
2 means for decoding the applied at least one symbol, and  
3 means for comparing the at least one decoded symbol with  
4 the at last one signal generated by said signal generat-  
5 ing means.

1        22. The apparatus of claim 20, further comprising  
2 means for providing the at least one commodity of the  
3 ~~group with at least one feature which causes the at~~  
4 least one commodity to exhibit the at least one identi-  
5 fying indicium.

1        23. The apparatus of claim 22 for facilitating  
2 identification of the contents of a container for a  
3 group of nonmetallic commodities, wherein said providing  
4 means includes means for combining said at least one  
5 commodity with at least one metallic particle.

1        24. The apparatus of claim 23, wherein the nonme-  
2 tallic commodities comprise tubular envelopes and said  
3 at least one metallic particle is provided at the enve-  
4 lope of the at least one commodity.

1        25. A smokers' product comprising a first portion  
2        and a second portion constituting at least one identify-  
3        ing indicium for the first portion.

1        26. The smokers' product of claim 25, wherein said  
2        second portion includes at least one piece of a metallic  
3        material.

1        27. The smokers' product of claim 26, wherein the  
2        first portion includes a filter for tobacco smoke and  
3        said at least one piece of metallic material is  
4        integrated into a haphazardly chosen part of said  
5        filter.